

Chronic Wasting Disease



Photo: Keith Weller, USDA ARS Image Gallery, used with permission.

CAUSE: Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is believed to be caused by a prion, similar to scrapie and Mad Cow Disease, that only affects deer and elk.

EFFECT: CWD is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain. Signs include loss of body condition, excessive salivation, behavioral changes, increased drinking and urinating, and eventually, death.

How is CWD spread? Animals can contract the disease from one another or from a contaminated environment, but the exact mechanism of transmission is unknown.

How can CWD be prevented? Elk and deer farmers should take part in CWD surveillance and control programs. Game hunters should look for signs of CWD in wild deer and elk, and report these signs to the proper authorities.

Can CWD affect people? To date, no humans have been infected with CWD. However, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention deems it wise to avoid food products from infected animals.

What if there is an outbreak? There is no treatment for CWD. Depopulation is the preferred method of control.

For more information on CWD, see:
[USDA APHIS: Chronic Wasting Disease](#)